NPS Form 10-900

OMB No. 10024-0018

(Oct. 1990)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Pippin Roller Coaster

other names/site number Zippin Pippin; Pippin Scenic Railway

2. Location

street & number Mid-South Fairgrounds bounded by East Parkway, Central Avenue, Southern Avenue and Early Maxwell Boulevard. N/A☐ not for publication

city or town Memphis N/A☐ vicinity

state Tennessee code TN county Shelby code 157 zip code 38108

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

- ☐ entered in the National Register.
  - ☐ See continuation sheet
- ☐ determined eligible for the National Register.
  - ☐ See continuation sheet
- ☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.
- ☐ removed from the National Register.
- ☐ other, (explain:)

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☐ private
- ☒ public-local
- ☐ public-State
- ☐ public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- ☐ building(s)
- ☐ district
- ☐ site
- ☒ structure
- ☐ object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
1	1	structures
		objects
2	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE-county fairground

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE-not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE
walls CONCRETE
roof ASPHALT SHINGLE
other WOOD, METAL, CONCRETE

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☐ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

ENGINEERING

Period of Significance
1928-1957

Criteria Considerations N/A
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** moved from its original location.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Significant Dates
1928

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Miller, John A - designer
Welcher, Lynn, Company - builder

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State Agency
- ☐ Federal Agency
- ☒ Local Government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:
City of Memphis

Pippin Roller Coaster
Name of Property

Shelby County, TN
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately two acres Southeast Memphis 409 SW

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	16	228292	3890121	3			
2				4			

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Judith Johnson and John T. Dulaney
organization _____ date May 14, 2007
street & number 176 Windover Cove, Apt. 1 telephone (901) 324-4618
city or town Memphis state TN zip code 38111

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items
(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Save Libertyland !, Inc. c/o Steve Mulroy; City of Memphis Parks Department c/o Cynthia Buchanan
street & number 1035 Perkins Terrace; 2599 Avery Avenue telephone 901/678-4944; 901/576-4230
city or town Memphis state TN zip code 38117; 38112

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Pippin Roller Coaster as constructed in 1928, is a 2865 foot long wooden structure designed by John Miller and built by the Lynn Welcher Company. It has a steel track along which the cars travel at an average of 20.8 miles per hour. It measures 70 feet tall at its highest incline allowing the cars to travel 40 miles per hour during the initial drop-off. The Pippin's total length is 800 feet, including the entrance gazebo and pre-show area. The total width of the structure at the station lift hill and 1st and 2nd drops is 80 feet, the total width at last "turn around" curve is 69 feet, and the passenger station length is 100 feet, and the width is 30 feet.

The Pippin, in essence is a specialized railroad system, consisting of a track that rises in designed patterns, up and down. Wooden roller coasters rely on a rough and "wild" ride as well as a psychological approach to inducing fear. Their shaky structures and track, which usually move anywhere from a few inches to a few feet with a passing train, give a sense of unreliability and the "threat" of collapse or disregard for safety. Of course, this assumption is purely mental and the wooden supports and track system are designed to sway with the force. If the track and structure are too rigid, they will break under the strain of the passing train. The swaying of the track suppresses the force, like a shock absorber.

Roller coasters are engineering feats designed to be amusement devices, in the sense that a rider of a roller coaster will go through a multitude of different emotions while riding, most notably fright and excitement, but will ultimately end up with a feeling of having been thrilled.

The construction material of the Pippin is long leaf pine wood held together by metal bolts and nails and the tracks are steel. The superstructure supporting the tracks is composed of large vertical beams supported by crossed smaller planks held in place by bolts and screws. The structure is held taut yet made pliable by its two sets of steel cables bolted into concrete and wood piers which are located at both half-circular ends of the elliptical structure where it reaches its maximum height.

According to the foreman who was responsible for maintenance, the workers walked the entire track every day to make sure the structure was stable. The long leaf pine wood was unpainted so that any defects or weakenesses in the structural components could be visually observed. The timbers were constantly replaced in-kind so that the entire structure was rebuilt approximately every three years.[1] A wooden roller coaster never "dies" because wood members are replaced as they become structurally inefficient due to rot, insect penetration, natural cracking or deterioration from stresses created by the weight and forces exerted by the train running on track.

The wooden structure is not completely self-powered, the coaster cars are pulled up with a chain operated by a small electric motor along the lift hill to the first peak of the track. Then potential energy becomes kinetic energy as the cars race down the first slope. Kinetic, or moving, energy is converted back into potential energy as the train moves up again to the second peak. This is necessarily lower as some mechanical energy is lost to friction. Then the train goes down again, and up, and on and on. The Pippin has enough kinetic energy to complete the entire course, at the end of which brakes bring the train to a complete stop and it is manually pushed into the station.

Its train was built in 1957 by the Philadelphia Toboggan Company, Inc. It consists of four individual cars equipped with three rows of two passenger seats coupled together. The coaster cars are currently being stored in another location.[2]

[1] "Rickety Look Adds to Pippin's Allure" *The Commercial Appeal* [Memphis, TN], March, 1993.
[2] Roller Coaster DataBase. May 1, 2007. http://www.rcdb.com/id253.htm. 1996-2007.

The Pippin's riders sat facing forward in the coaster car and were equipped with seat belts and a single lap bar. The cars are held in place by "underfriction wheels," or "upstop wheels," which keep the coaster cars locked to their tracks and are critical for allowing the cars to reach high speeds and turn at sharp angles even in rapid succession.

The Pippin's train was fitted with anti-rollback "dogs" which are essentially heavy-duty pieces of metal which fall and rest in each groove of the anti-rollback device on the track as the trains ascend the lift-hill. This makes the "clicking" sound and essentially allows the train to go upwards only, effectively preventing the train from rolling back down the hill should it ever encounter a power failure or broken chain.

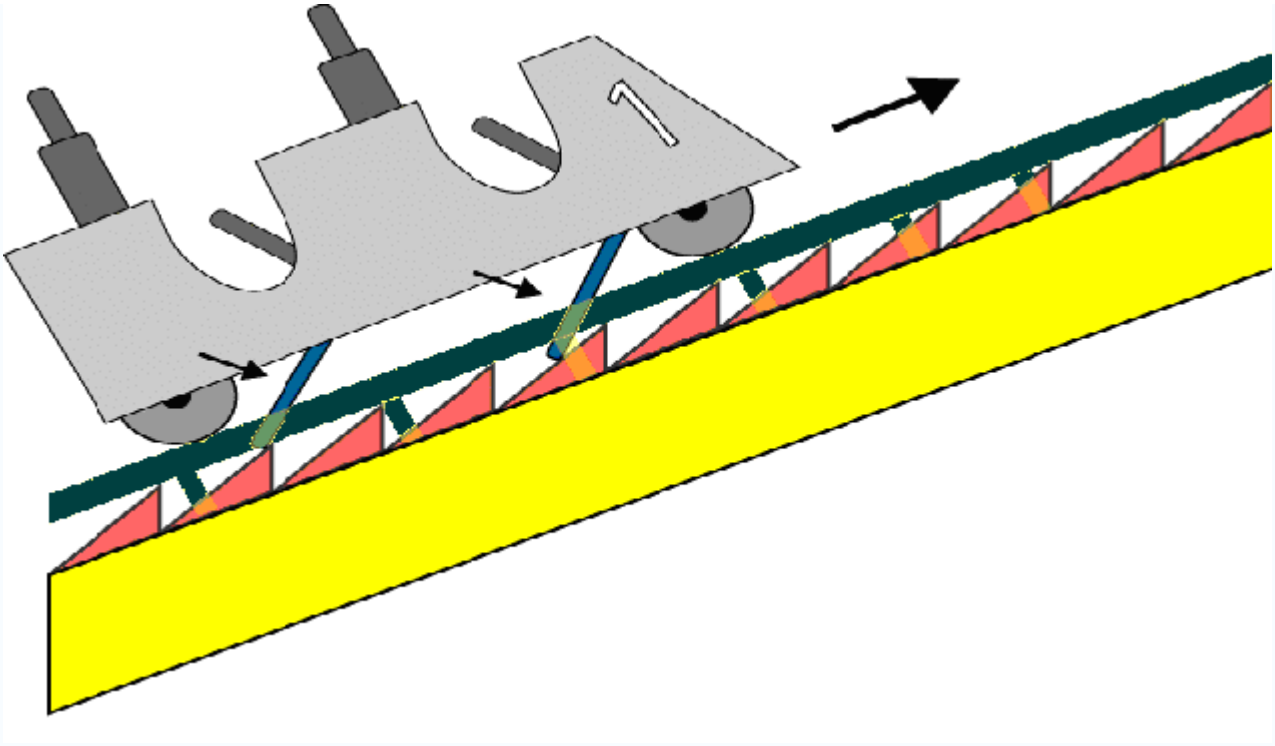


Diagram depicting the anti-rollback feature

Wooden roller coasters such as the Pippin (also known amongst enthusiasts as 'Woodies') are fondly looked at by coaster enthusiasts for their more rough ride and "air time" produced by negative G-forces when the train reaches the top of some inclines along the ride.

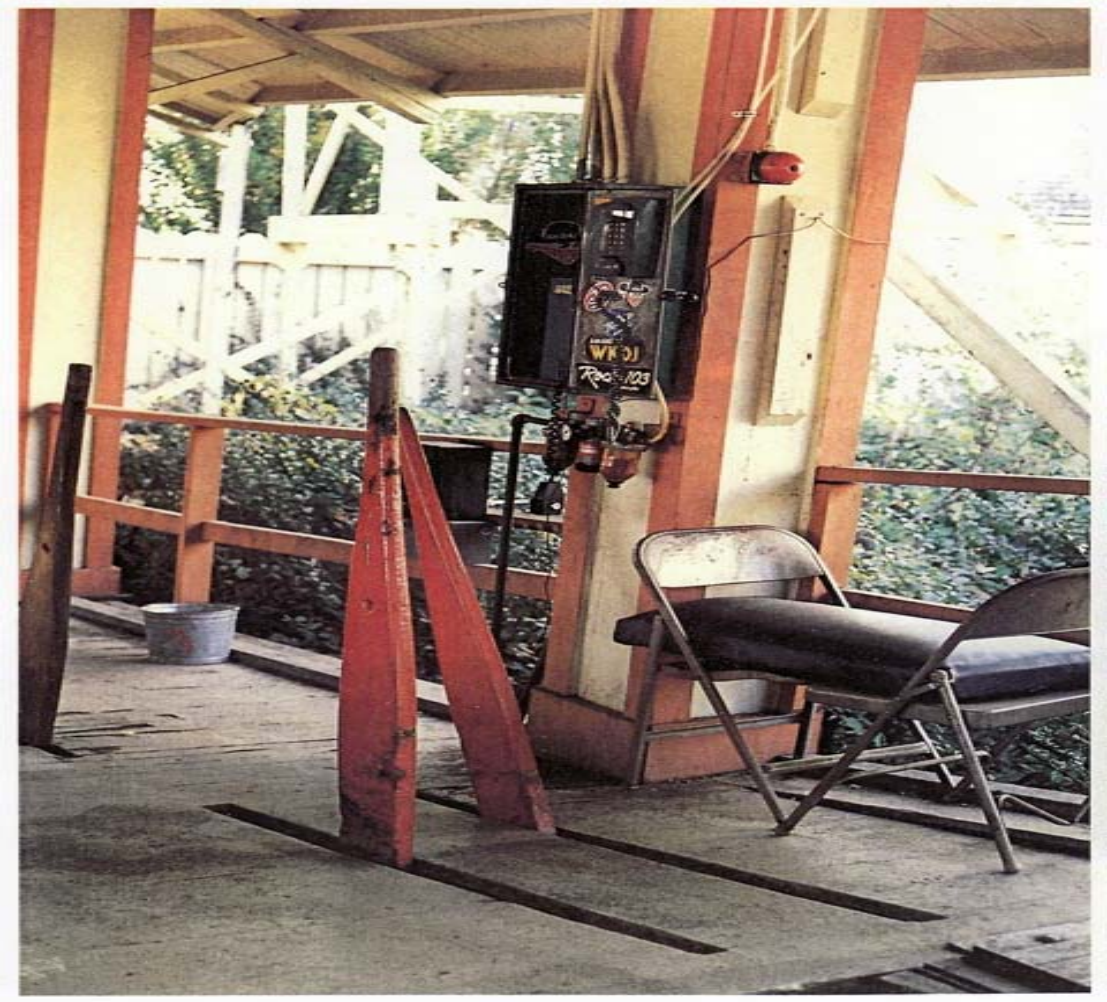
Path of Pippin Roller Coaster (*Google Earth Image*, http://www.google.com/June 23, 2007)

Following is a description of the actual 90-second course by Leigh Ann Jordan who has ridden the ride numerous times, “Upon leaving the seating area the cars are pulled north in a tight 180-degree right hand turn and enter the lift hill and the train hooks to the chain. After cresting the crown of the lift hill, the track makes another 180-degree right hand turn and takes the first drop, then at the top of the hill takes another 180-degree right hand turn and passes on the outside of the lift hill and enters into the second drop. The coaster then begins a traditional out and back run which sends the cars traveling west down a hill. There's one more slight hill after this drop, then the cars come back into the passenger loading area.”[3]

The entrance to the Pippin begins in a c. 1976 open rectangular shed structure called a pre-show building filled with floor mounted metal poles forming narrow aisles where the passengers queue up. Entrance to the pre-show area is through an octagonal gazebo. The roof is supported by wood poles topped by arched spandrels. The pre-show building is a noncontributing building due to its age.

The actual station’s entrance is through a pair of box columns supporting a cross beam leading into a c. 1928 rectangular wood and wire station located on the southwest corner of the coaster where the passengers are loaded into the coaster cars. On the north side is an electrical box and the three manual wooden levers that operate the coaster car brakes (depicted below).

[3] Correspondence between Leigh Ann Jordan and author.



Pippin Handbrakes (photograph from *The Democratic Forest* by William Eggleston)

On the south side, the passengers move up to a series of wood fences that allow them to line up in pairs. After the coaster cars have unloaded in the open east side of the shed, twelve moveable ceiling mounted metal arms swing forward to allow the next passengers to be seated in an orderly fashion. Approximately 1600 electric lights are strung in intervals above the handrails along the rises of the track.

A c. 1954 concrete block house situated along the north side of the seating platform near the entrance holds an electrical generator which provides electricity for the ride. The generator house has concrete block walls and a shed roof. Three plain doors provide access to the building. The generator house is a contributing building.

The Pippin retains integrity of setting, as the structure maintains its relationship to the buildings seminal to the historic development of the Fairgrounds. The structure's integrity of setting is also evoked by the original streets including Early Maxwell Boulevard which serve as the major thoroughfares in the Fairgrounds.

In summation, the Pippin is a John Miller underfriction wheel scenic railway which has remained in continuous use until very recently . The Pippin has been enjoyed by generations of Memphians and hopefully will continue to provide thrills for future generations.

A wooden roller coaster structure consists of the following main structure components and "typical" systems. The Pippin contains all these elements.

Bents: Main track support system and main structural support system. Two posts with horizontal and diagonal cross bracing with a ledger at the top on which sits the track. The cross bracing is usually 3 X 6 boards placed horizontally and level.

The next board sits on top of the horizontal board and runs diagonally upwards, at a 45-degree angle, then the system is repeated until the ledger, the main board on which the track sits, is reached. The Pippin uses 4 X 6 posts and 2 X 6 cross bracing members instead of the typical 3 X 6 boards.

Ledger: the ledger is a 3 X 12 board located at the top of the bents on which the track sets.

Track: The track is a series of '2 by' materials, usually 2 X 10 and 2 X 12 nailed together on top of one another to create a "stack" or plys. From 7 to 10 boards are used on wooden roller coasters with the top two layers being 2-inches wider than the bottom layers. The track sits on top of the ledgers. The Pippin has a 7-ply track with the bottom 5-plys of 2 X 6's and the top 2-plys of 2 X 8's.

Track Steel: Refers to the flat bar steel that the wheels of the coaster cars encounter as they run on the track. There are three separate pieces; the top running steel, usually 6-inches wide with today's standards, the side friction steel 3-inches wide that is on the inside of the top 2-plys of track and the up-stop steel a piece of 2-inch steel bar under the overhang created by the larger dimensional top 2-plys of wood. The up-stop wheels on the cars are what keep the cars from leaving the track. The Pippin has a 4-inch wide top running steel member.

Track Ties: 4 x 4 boards placed perpendicular to the direction of travel and under the stack track. They keep the track from spreading. They are attached to the track with a 5/8-inch bolt that runs through all of the plys of the track. They are normally 18-inches apart on today's coasters. The Pippin utilizes 1/2-inch bolts throughout the ride.

Walk Boards: Are the longitudinal catwalks on both sides of the track that are used by the mechanics maintaining the ride and for emergency evacuation of passengers from the ride. Attached to the walk boards approximately every 12-inches are 2 X 2-inch boards called cleats. They assist in providing secure footing when walking

Hand Rails: Are usually 2 X 6- inch boards nailed to the top of the posts that are used by the mechanics when they walk on the walk boards and for emergency evacuation of passengers from the ride.

Ribbon Boards: Are 2 X 6 boards nailed on the outside of the bents horizontally in the direction of travel that assist in tying the bents together.

Bent Diagonals: Today, 4 X 4 boards are typically placed at a 45-degree angle from the top of the foundation and run continuously to a position on a post at the bottom of the walk boards. They may span several bents before they reach the top of their installation path. They are placed longitudinally on the outside of the bent and in between the posts. The Pippin uses 3 X 4 boards in an X cross bracing pattern in place of the 4 X 4 system.

Batter Braces: The outrigger support bent structure systems along the side and attached perpendicularly to the main bent system of the structure. They can be located on the outside and/or inside of the main track bent system.

Commonly located in conjunction with the curves to assist in supporting the structure from the lateral forces of the train as it travels around a curve. In addition to batter braces, the Pippin uses cables attached at the center of the inside of the curve, which is also a common practice.

Foundations: Concrete pads, strips and/or piers on which the posts set. An anchor strap, imbedded into the concrete and bolted to the post, keeps the post resting in the center of the foundation(s). In normal soil conditions they are 18-24 inches square or in diameter and 6 to 8 feet deep. While the foundations keep the posts from sinking into the earth, as importantly they provide a weighted anchor counteracting the uplift forces of high winds in an inclement weather situation. The Pippin uses a 12 X 12-inch pier foundation system. The depth of these foundations is not known.

Lift Hill Assembly: An electric motor turns a gear that goes through a series of other gears to turn a sprocket on which a “barrel” chain is attached. The chain has a bottom sprocket and a top sprocket at the top of the lift hill and the chain runs in a steel trough. The motor is housed in a motor house at the base of the lift hill. At the top of the lift hill is the top sprocket for the chain and it acts like a guide keeping the chain in position as it turns.

The cars/train attach to the chain by hook type protrusions mounted on the bottom front of the cars that insert themselves inside the barrel of the chain and the cars/train moves in the direction of the chain travel to the top of the lift hill where the car disengages itself from the chain and the car is released to run freely on the track.

Anti-Roll-Backs: The anti-roll backs are placed on the lift hill next to the chain and sometimes on other hills. They are the system that prevents the train from rolling backwards down the hill if its forward movement is stopped. They are also the source of the clackety-clack noise when going up the lift hill, being pulled by the chain.

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Pippin Roller Coaster, designed by John A. Miller and built by the Lynn Welcher Company, was erected at the former Tri-State Fairgrounds in Memphis, Tennessee in 1923 and rebuilt in 1928. The Pippin is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for design and construction. Contextually the Pippin relates to the historic theme of engineering as it illustrates the particular method of construction of the structural system of the roller coaster amusement ride. The Pippin is an early wooden roller coaster designed by Miller, who is widely known as a pioneer in roller coaster design, and features many of the innovations created by Miller. The ride features innovations that were developed by Miller such as the safety chain dog and an underfriction track.

John Miller

The Pippin uses a three-wheel design, pioneered by John Miller. Born August John Mueller in Homewood, Illinois, in 1874, he used the anglicized Miller as his professional moniker. He is often called the Thomas Edison of roller coasters and earned more than 100 patents related to coaster technology and ride safety. He embarked in 1893 on a career that spanned nearly 50 years. At 19 years of age he began working with LaMarcus Thompson who is generally credited with having created the United States' first roller coaster in Coney Island, New York in 1884.

John Miller (*The Incredible Scream Machine)*

By 1911, Miller was a consultant for the Philadelphia Toboggan Company, for whom he designed at least a dozen roller coasters. He then worked with Josiah and Fred Pearce on coasters and also with Frederick Ingersoll. In 1908 he formed a partnership with Harry C. Baker which lasted until 1926. Via this enterprise, Miller would create a mind-boggling number of coasters. In 1920 alone, he built at least 15 coasters in cities across the United States. The men broke off their partnership in 1926.

After that he became associated with the Dayton Fun House and Riding Device Manufacturing Company until 1932 (later the National Amusement Device Corporation). It is surmised that Miller rebuilt the Pippin in 1928. Miller died in 1941 in Houston, Texas while planning a coaster there.[4]

Miller constantly pushed the envelope when it came to roller coaster thrills and technology. He would insist that drops could be higher, steeper; turns could be sharper, the cars quicker. His inventions included many safety technologies that are still employed in today's roller coasters. These include his 1910 creation of the "safety chain dog," or, safety ratchet, a device that prevented coaster cars from rolling backward down the lift hill if the pull chain broke. This device attached to the track and clicked tightly into the chain rungs. This mechanism later evolved into the hardware that produces wooden coasters' trademark "clickety-clackety." Another significant achievement was Miller's 1919 invention of "underfriction wheels," or "upstop wheels," which keep coaster cars locked to their tracks. This is critical for allowing the cars to reach high speeds, turn at sharp angles, and go upside down, safely, even in rapid succession. All of these innovations are present on the Pippin.

Background

[4] Robert Cartmell. *The Incredible Scream Machine: A History of the Roller Coaster*. (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State U), pp117-121.

LaMarcus Adna Thompson patented the first "Scenic Railway structure" in the United States in 1885. Shortly thereafter, the first scenic railway in Memphis, a side friction roller coaster named The Crazy Eight, appeared at the East End Park, a new style of amusement park called the trolley park. This park was created by the Memphis Street Railway Company.

Streetcars and trolleys were an important mode of mass transportation during the last decades of the nineteenth century, but they earned little revenue on the weekends because workers did not have any reason to travel on them. So the streetcar companies created trolley parks which gave city dwellers and their families a reason to hop aboard the trolley and head to the countryside for a day of fun. The *Commercial Appeal* of 8 January 1933 recalled former park officials who "had charge of the Figure Eight, predecessor of the Fairgrounds Pippin. In addition to the Figure Eight, the park also featured the Dips, another ride somewhat like the more modern Pippin. The park's end is said to have been brought about by state prohibition law; it closed in 1913 or 1914."[5]

Another venue for amusement rides were the fairs, which were held in Memphis beginning in 1856 to promote agricultural and business interests of the area and soon became an important fixture in the social and business life of Shelby County. The fair moved from place to place until the old Montgomery Park horse-racing course was leased by the city to become the permanent home of the Tri-State Fair in 1908. A midway with rides was introduced for the first time that year.[6]

In 1912, the city bought Montgomery Park and began to establish fair traditions such as Women's Day and auto racing. When the Memphis Street Railway Company constructed large car barns across the street where Young Avenue intersected with East Parkway, the Tri-State Fairgrounds became the new terminus park for the streetcars. A permanent amusement park was installed in the 119-acre park in 1915. By 1917, the fairgrounds were put under the auspices of the Memphis Park Commission.[7]

The twenties were an amazing time of change in the United States. The country came out of the horror of WWI and people wanted to indulge themselves. Flappers danced to rambunctious jazz music, radio and film were becoming an integral part of American life, and the Ziegfield Follies was a hit featuring young star Will Rogers. Another symbol of the new freethinking decade was the abundance of roller coasters. Estimates state that during the peak year between 1,500 and 2,000 coasters existed during this time period, an astounding figure even by today's standards.[8]

Scenic railways spread to amusement parks all around the United States and the rest of the world. Many old wooden roller coasters are still operational. In 1924 Miller built a roller coaster known as the Pippin in Kennywood Park, West Mifflin, PA (outside Pittsburgh); this coaster was later converted by Andrew Vettel to become the Thunderbolt, still in existence. Kennywood Park is a National Historic Landmark, so designated February 27, 1987 and has been called the "Roller Coaster Capitol of the World".[9]

Elsewhere in Tennessee, Nashville is said to have had a Miller designed coaster called Dips Coaster at the State Fair Grounds, dated 1925.[10] Knoxville had a Philadelphia Toboggan Co. (PTC) coaster, built in 1927 and designed by

[5] LeRoy Pope. " East End Park-It's a Big Subdivision Now-Recalls Dear Memories." *Commercial Appeal* [Memphis, TN], January, 1933
[6] Emily Yellin. *A History of the Mid-South Fair*. Memphis, TN, Guild Binder Press, 1995. p. 5.
[7] ibid. p.7.
[8] http://www.ultimaterollercoaster.com/coasters/history. May 3, 2007.
[9] Cartmell. p. 217.
[10] Cartmell. p. 126.

Herbert P. Schmeck, in Chilhowee Park. Chattanooga had a PTC coaster, built the following year and also by Schmeck, in Warner Park.[11]

Memphis was no exception to the 1920s roller coaster craze. According to the Memphis Park Commission (MPC) minutes, on August 10, 1923 a contract was signed between Tri-State Fair, Inc. and Lynn Welcher & Co. of New York City agreeing that the latter will "erect and operate an amusement device known as a "Giant Coaster."[12]

It would appear that designers and builders John Miller and Harry Baker partnered with concessionaires such as Lynn Welcher in erecting and operating roller coasters at amusement parks. Welcher was a widely known amusement concession owner and operator of the Old Mill, Casino, and Pippin at the Fair Grounds and who was also operating four other roller coasters around the country. The MPC minutes from August, 1923 recorded approval of locations for "Permanent Concessions" including a Roller Coaster, "as formerly located by Mr. Miller, Engineer for the Concession Company".[13]

On 23 September, 1923, the Tri-State Fair debuted "Joy Plaza," a $200,000 amusement park and fair buildings upgrade.[14] One of the reasons for all the joy was a new roller coaster over 3000 feet in length, the so-called Camel's Back for its twin 60-foot peaks. In roller coaster parlance camel back refers to a ride with a series of hills resembling a camel's back, so the title is more a description of a ride rather than a name for one.

By 1924 the Camel's Back, was rechristened the Pippin. According to a personal communication from Mr. Jim Barrick, author of the John Miller website, Miller was fond of the name Pippin and used it often as a generic name for his roller coasters. The *Commercial Appeal* newspaper of 31 May 1924, writing of the thousands who attended the opening of the Fair Ground Amusement Park that spring, mentioned that "those who like to feel their heart rise to the height of the Adam's apple climbed aboard the 'Pippin.'"[15] Its early popularity was further attested in a 30 May 1926 newspaper account, when "The Pippin and the Scooter had as heavy patronage as they could take care of."[16]

One aspect of the early Pippin different from that of today was its length; according to both a 1926 Park Commission map of the Fairgrounds and the 1927 Sanborn Insurance Map of Memphis, the coaster extended so far east that it crossed Louisiana Avenue, (Early Maxwell Boulevard). A terrible spring storm on the 21 of April, 1928 severely damaged the ride. "Heaviest damage was to the Pippin, once the joy of kids seeking a thrill, but now a wreckage of kindling wood. It is estimated that between $20,000 and $30,000 will be needed to rebuild the amusement device. Insurance of $18,000 was carried. The amusement device is privately owned and the non-resident owners were notified."[17]

Presumably John Miller returned to oversee the rebuilding. By the time the newly renamed Mid-South Fair opened in September, the Pippin was rebuilt into its present configuration and now ended west of Louisiana (Early Maxwell) Boulevard, as compared with track length as shown in 1927 Sanborn Fire Map, Vol. 6, P. 650."[18]

Ironically, after the fair had enjoyed its best attendance ever in September, 1929, the stock market crashed a month later. The ensuing Great Depression marked the end of the golden age of roller coasters.[19] The 1930s was a struggle

[11] Ibid. p. 153-55.
[12] Memphis Park Commission: Book 3 (Jan. 1916-Dec. 1923), Page 366, Aug. 16, 1923.
[13] Ibid. Pages 390-391, Mar. 4, 1924.
[14] "Joy Reigns at New $200,00 Plaza." *Commercial Appeal* [Memphis,TN], September, 1923.
[15] "Thousands See New Amusement Devices." *Commercial Appeal* [Memphis,TN], May 1924.
[16] "Fairgrounds Park Has Big Opening Day." *Commercial Appeal* [Memphis,TN], May 1926.
[17] "Three Killed, Two Scores Injured." *Commercial Appeal* [Memphis,TN], April, 1928.
[18] 1952 Sanborn Fire Map, Volume 6, P. 650.

for survival for the Mid-South Fair. In order to save money, the city leased their amusement park concessions to local businessmen Henry A. Beaudoin and A. E. Willis.

However, the Pippin remained the property of the Lynn Welcher Company and continued as a crowd pleasing money maker. Owner Lynn Welcher died at the fairgrounds of a heart attack on September 1, 1935. According to his obituary, the 67-year-old Welcher was an old time vaudeville trouper who owned extensive amusement interests throughout the country. His home was in Santa Monica, CA, but he made centrally located Memphis his headquarters during the summer months.[20]

Prosperity returned with World War II. A newspaper account from 1943 states that the Pippin was the amusement park's highest grossing ride with $73,952 in receipts.[21] As the returning troops began to marry and have children, the resulting population boom spurred the growth of Fairgrounds Amusement Park as it was now called.

In 1945, the Memphis Park Comission re-municipalized all the park concessions except the Pippin which remained privately owned. In 1946, a $225,000 upgrade of infrastructure for the park was begun with added parking and an ambitious plan for more rides and better concessions. At a May 15 special meeting of the Park Commission, Chairman John Vesey recommended that the board purchase "the amusement device . . . known as the "Pippin Coaster"" from a group including M. M. Holman, Charles F. Krug, Mrs. John Miller (John Miller's widow), Mrs. Ida P. Baker, et al, for $40,000.00 to be paid in three installments.[22]

By 1949, the Park Commission allowed a private operator, J. C. Levy to develop Kiddie Land, with ten rides designed for small children including the Little Pippin. Kiddie-coasters became immensely popular in the fifties, as parents with steadily rising incomes and growing families looked for new things to do with their children. Kiddie-coasters featured simple double out and back layouts.

The original Pippin continued to be a draw for older children and adults. During this era various newspapers reported rotted lumber and loose bolts on the wooden ride and there were a few cries to tear it down. But it was staunchly defended by the Park Commission superintendent who cited ongoing repairs to the structure. The MPC minutes of April 1957 show that bids are received for Pippin Trains (three sets each of one lead car plus three follow-cars) from Philadelphia Toboggan Co. and National Amusement Device Co. The MPC recommended to the City Commission that the low bid of $19,290.00 from the National Amusement Device Company be accepted.[23]

The 1960s were a time of growth and uncertainty for the amusement parks industry, but helped to set the stage for a boom that came one decade later. The time period began with many parks wanting to emulate the Disney model and open theme parks, often with costly results. Some of the first of these were Pacific Ocean Park, Pleasure Island, and Freedomland U.S.A.[24]

In the 1970s, the city of Memphis made plans to build a theme park around the Pippin and the Grand Carousel, also on the grounds. Kiddie Land was relocated to the Memphis Zoo. The theme park at the fairgrounds was called Libertyland, and it opened in 1976. Renamed the Zippin Pippin, the roller coaster was spruced up with new paint and a shed to shelter the waitng riders and billed as the most prominent and historic ride at Libertyland. It was reportedly Elvis Presley's favorite roller coaster and he would rent the entire park on occasion just to ride it without constant fan

[19] http://www.ultimaterollercoaster.com/coasters/history. May 12, 2007.
[20] "Lynn Welcher Dies, Was Concessionaire." *Commercial Appeal* [Memphis,TN], September, 1935.
[21] "$262,351 Fun Harvest on Fairgrounds Rides. " *Press Scimitar* [Memphis, TN], September, 1943.
[22] Memphis Park Commission: Book 6 (Jan. 1938-Dec. 1948), Page 336, May 15, 1946.
[23] Memphis Park Commission: Book 8 (July 1954-Aug. 1958), Page 298-299, Apr. 4, 1957.
[24] http://www.ultimaterllercoaster.com/coasters/history/1960_1970/. 1996-2007. May 12, 2007.

interference. Just a week before his death, Elvis rented the park from 1 a.m. to 7 a.m. to entertain a small number of guests and he rode the Zippin Pippin for hours without stopping. In 1979, an attempt to place the Pippin on the National Register was begun but never completed.

1957 Pippin lead passenger car favored by Elvis (www.canobiefan.com, May 1, 2007)

The Pippin and other fairgrounds rides were used as teaching tools in Memphis City School curriculum in the early 1990s, in the Discovery program entitled, "Coaster, Carousel Still Libertyland's Top Attractions" by Kim Brukardt. [25] The Pippin was also used as a movie location for a 1991 film entitled "Memphis" and starring Memphis native, actress Cybill Shepherd.

On October 29, 2005, citing a persistent loss of money, Libertyland closed its gates for good. On June 21, 2006 the Pippin was sold at auction by Norton Auctioneers of Coldwater, Michigan. Robert Reynolds, former bassist with the country band The Mavericks, and Stephen Shutts [partners in a traveling museum called the Honky Tonk Hall of Fame & Rock-N-Roll Roadshow] purchased the entire Pippin for $2,500.[26]

[25] Kim Brukardt, "Coaster, Carousel Still Libetyland's Top Attractions," *Amusement Business*, March 1993.
[26] "Into the sunset," *Commercial Appeal* [Memphis, TN}, June, 2006.

They showed up planning to bid on the roller coaster car favored by Presley but purchased the entire structure due to the low price. Reportedly, it was so inexpensive because the sale agreement requires the buyer to remove it in 30 days. The buyers did not follow up on their agreement. Then on October 29th, 2006, it was announced that the Roanoke Rapids, N.C. Tourism Bureau had bought the Zippin Pippin from Reynolds and Shutts for a new tourist development under construction named Carolina Crossroads.[27]

In May, 2007, the Carolina Crossroads organization donated the Pippin to a local preservation group, Save Libertyland, formed to try and convince the city to save the Pippin. They in turn offered to donate it to the Memphis Park Commission.[28] The Fairgrounds are currently being studied for redevelopment purposes. Save Libertyland is currently exploring possible venues that would allow the Pippin Roller Coaster to continue to operate.

[27] http://www.ultimaterollercoaster.com/coasters/history. May 10, 2007.
[28] "Pippin Track Given to Local Group", *Commercial Appeal*, [Memphis, TN], April 2007.

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries of the Pippin are the structure itself.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries of the Pippin are the current parameters of the structure.

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs by: Judith Johnson
Judith Johnson & Associates

Date: May 14, 2007
Negatives: Tennessee Historical Commission
2941 Lebanon Road
Nashville, TN 37243

1 of 17	Ride entrance looking east
2 of 17	Manual brakes
3 of 17	Loading deck and queues for entry into cars
4 of 17	Electrical box on loading platform
5 of 17	View of 60’ western roller coaster incline looking east
6 of 17	Bracing studs and guy wires embedded in concrete at east end of track looking east
7 of 17	Detail of construction
8 of 17	East end of ride looking east
9 of 17	Detail of track
10 of 17	Bracing detail
11 of 17	West end of ride with track and bracing and replacement parts shed
12 of 17	Tracks and electrical generator house looking northwest
13 of 17	End of circuit looking due east
14 of 17	Passenger loading structure, looking north
15 of 17	Start of first incline with pulley chain, looking east
16 of 17	Electrical house, looking northwest
17 of 17	Unloading platform and passenger loading structure, looking west